

- 27 -

**RETICLE-HOLDING PODS AND METHODS FOR HOLDING THIN,  
CIRCULAR RETICLES, AND RETICLE-HANDLING SYSTEMS, UTILIZING  
SAME**

5

**Abstract of the Disclosure**

Reticle-holding devices (reticle "pods") are disclosed for holding circular reticles as used microlithography systems that use circular reticles. An exemplary reticle pod includes a base and cover. Mounted to the base are multiple (desirably three) reticle-support blocks providing three respective, equally spaced, reticle-contact surfaces that support a reticle in the peripheral "handling zone" of the reticle. Mounted to the inside surface of the cover are corresponding compliant pressure-application members (desirably respective flat springs terminating with respective reticle-contact members) that apply a holding force to the reticle. A respective portion of the reticle is situated between each pressure-application member and a respective reticle-support surface. Thus, the reticle, configured as a SEMI standard wafer, is stably held at three points in the handling zone of the reticle without damaging the reticle.